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ABSTRACT

Publishers of high school composition textbooks gather information about the "book market" through outside statistical analyses or case studies and through their own interviews and polls. Recently, such studies and interviews have revealed significant differences in classroom practices. Consequently, publishers are faced with such questions as (1) How do editors and writers package a writing process? (2) How do publishers develop writing activities with universal relevance? (3) What kind of writing is most important to teachers? (4) How do publishers appeal to the part of the market that finds teaching a writing process too hard? (5) How can publishers help teachers faced with standardized and competency tests? (6) How much reading about writing can publishers expect students to do? and, (7) What role, if any, should a composition textbook play in helping students with writing in other disciplines? Nevertheless, research studies and changes in classroom practices have resulted in some textbook changes, among them: chapters about prewriting and invention, acknowledgement of peer editing, recognition of writing as process not product, and an extension of composition assignments to literature textbooks. Such changes suggest that there is no missing link between theory and practice--just a time lag. (HOD)

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PAPER PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION (35TH, NEW YORK CITY, MARCH 29-31, 1984)

PANEL TITLE: "MISSING LINKS: COLLEGE AND HIGH SCHOOL COMPOSITION TEXTS"

PRESENTATION TITLE: "IS THERE A MISSING LINK?"

PRESENTER: FRANCINE WEINBERG, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, SECONDARY ENGLISH, MACMILLAN PUBLISHING COMPANY, NEW YORK

I. DIRECTION OF PRESENTATION

I have heard it said that publishers can dictate curricula. Some people truly believe that publishers of high school composition textbooks should tell high school teachers how to teach composition, and of course among enlightened critics "how to teach composition" these days would mean teaching composition as process. I hope today to show that high school teachers want publishers to be responsive to them but not to tell them what to do. I hope also to show why publishers cannot by themselves bring about changes in classroom instruction and cannot provide universal solutions to problems that vary so from classroom to classroom, from school to school, and from state to state. There are, however, areas in which publishers can and have changed. What we have, I'll argue, is not a missing link between college and composition texts but perhaps a time lag.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

What is it that publishers of high school textbooks can and should do? The publisher's first obligation is to have two sets of eyes--one set looking at university theorists and Writing Projects, the other set looking at the actual practice of writing instruction in high school classrooms. I obviously don't have to tell you what the first set of eyes sees. But I'd like to run over what the second set of eyes sees--and what publishers have to ask themselves as a result of what they see.

II. WHAT PUBLISHERS SEE

1. Publishers have at least two ways of learning about the market. First, they can avail themselves of studies--statistical analyses or case studies--that people like you in this audience--professional researchers--have conducted. We recently took time to look at the report produced by Arthur Applebee and colleagues on the intensive look they took at writing in the high schools in 1980 [Writing in the Secondary School: English in the Content Areas, NCTE: 1981]. We abstracted three major points from that study:

   A. They asked about amount and frequency of writing: In English classrooms only 10% of lesson time was devoted to writing of at least one paragraph in length. Teachers seemed to think a class

was "full of writing" if students wrote one-sentence answers to study questions.

B. They asked about concern for audience--natural contexts: In English classes only 16% of teachers studied reported that student writing was regularly read by other students.

C. They asked about prewriting and revising: The Applebee report stated, "There is little reflection in the practices we observed of recent studies of composing which suggest that writing is a process with a number of distinct stages, each with its own focus and demands" (page 102); 77.9 % of English teachers began writing in class but only 37.1% actually did brainstorming. Only 23% of English students interviewed claimed to make changes that went beyond spelling, mechanics, usage, and vocabulary choice.

2. The Applebee study is now 3-4 years old. And so we as publishers turned to our other means of finding out about the marketplace--our own interviewing and polling. What did we as publishers find when we recently spoke to teachers and coordinators and instructors of student teachers from various regions of the U.S.? We came up with two major findings:

A. First, there has been much dissemination of the idea of writing as process and of the importance of revision since the Applebee study:

EXAMPLES

(1) A teacher from Ohio no longer teaches grammar for its own sake but uses it where appropriate within her review of expository writing to make the point that how you say something can often determine what you say.

(2) A teacher from Virginia reduces attention to grammar to just a few pre-announced concerns before kids begin writing (e.g., today we will not accept fragments). She gets the class sharing ideas in a brainstorming way and thinks that the most important thing she has taught kids--and their parents--is that the first thing is <u>not</u> to put pencil to paper.

(3) A teacher in Wisconsin still devotes 18 weeks to grammar review for her college-bound 12th graders but does have a progressive attitude toward composition instruction: As a result of writing workshops in her district, she applies Weehawken-influenced prewriting activities such as Question-Answer-Development.

(4) A teacher from West Lafayette, Ind., now in the district office, took many workshops and institutes with Lazarus, Hunt, Mellon, Macrorie, Winterowd, etc. The teacher claims he has adapted and borrowed from these, helping students with filtering material, selecting, editing.

(5) A chairperson in New Jersey is these days much more concerned with finding material that works for prewriting and that recognizes the reality of a writing process.

(6) A teacher from New Jersey has taken workshops with Janet Emig, Peter Elbow, and others, and is now comfortable introducing some of their ideas into her junior high classroom: brainstorming, free writing, informal outlining. She puts lots of emphasis on prewriting activities and then defines an audience for the students. She gets students to hand in rough, double-spaced drafts, and then sets up peer-editing conferences and checklists for students to use.

(7) A curriculum coordinator from upstate New York used to assign a topic to her students, and presumed that all their thinking could go on in their minds so that when they sat down to write they'd have fully hatched prose. Then she got involved in the first Writing Project replication site outside of the Bay Area

and learned that writing is a stage in an overall process that requires more time and many drafts--a process that includes brainstorming, mapping, etc., etc., etc. She teaches kids that a draft is a draft and finds they become more comfortable knowing that what they write is not final. She teaches them to step away from what they write and let it cool. She's set up successful peer conferring.

B. The examples I've just run through--from the Northeast, the Midatlantic states, and the nearby Midwest--are not the whole story, though. Our second major finding grows out of the fact that many of the people whom I just cited reminded us that they might be the exceptions in their areas. Most teachers, they claimed, did not know how to work with their students through the writing process or did not know how to respond to students the way that this process demands one respond. Here's what we found to be the situation in other parts of the country. And, I might add, it's not just the DAR or other outside influences, as Mr. Guth [another presenter on the panel: Hans Guth] suggests, but your high school colleagues themselves who cannot unanimously adopt your research into their high school classrooms.

(1) A language arts coordinator in one southeastern state went so far as to say that training teachers to teach writing in the high schools is a never-ending battle. She says: We've learned how to teach writing, but regardless of what we say to high school teachers they teach the same way. In the teacher-ed. programs at this state's universities, potential or practicing English teachers are taught that writing can best be introduced as a process where instead of tons of assignments you work and rework a limited number. According to this coordinator, teachers go right back to the classroom and make writing assignments in a vacuum, not based on anything. Then the teacher marks the paper, and it goes into the trashcan. We asked the coordinator why teachers resist applying the research. We wondered if the process just takes too much of the teacher's time. No, she said, they can't use that argument. After all, she went on to explain, reading and grading so many compositions the old-fashioned way takes lots of time. She fears that some teachers persist in ignoring the research on process because they'd rather maintain power in the classroom. And I guess you could say that the old-fashioned method--assign a composition, demand that kids go off each on his or her own to write, and insist they hand in a final copy for the teacher to grade--the old-fashioned method <u>is</u> a power play. In addition, this language arts coordinator

reminds us, lots of secondary teachers are there, they think, to teach content--which is literature or grammar--not a skill--such as writing.

(2) In a southwestern state a university teacher of student teachers finds that when she gets potential teachers into her class--after they've already had several methodology classes, they still often have not heard of Graves or Moffet--and this, she claims, is an enlightened state. The Writing Projects in this state are met with great enthusiasm when teachers come to them, but when the teachers go back to the classrooms where they are being pushed to raise their students' standardized test scores, they confuse that mandate with the teaching of grammar and that's the end of what they gleaned from Writing Project instruction. She feels much also has to do with these teachers' perceptions that they couldn't possibly manage a peer-editing environment. And so they redevelop their fascination with ditto sheets and grammar drill. Every once in a while, a former student teacher of this woman's will come to her and say, "Now that I'm in my fifth year of teaching, I finally see what you meant about the process of writing." The sadness is that, according to this instructor from the Southwest, fewer and fewer teachers are lasting the five years it seems to take to come to the epiphany.

III. WHAT PUBLISHERS DO AND WHAT PUBLISHERS HAVE TO ASK THEMSELVES

When you wonder why not all high school composition textbooks are yet what you might want them to be, you have to remember the significant instructional differences in this country's classrooms--differences I just tried to point out with examples. Without these differences a publisher might be able to produce the universally acceptable textbook that would incorporate all your research. But with these differences publishers have to ask themselves many questions--and it simply takes a long time to find satisfactory answers to all these questions. We publish books that haven't yet answered all the questions the way you might want them answered, and so we keep on asking the questions as we do and redo books. The questions that we ask ourselves everyday as we think about the differences in the marketplace include the following:

1. How do editors and writers package a process? How can they show on paper something that is not really linear?

2. How do we develop writing activities with universal relevance? What kind of writing is most important to teachers? Creative? Analytical? Do teachers prefer to have instruction and assignments organized according to modes of discourse or some other way (say, genres)? The publisher has to have answers to those questions in

to pick models and generate assignments, but the publisher finds that often there isn't any consensus.

3. How do we appeal to that part of the market that finds teaching a process too hard? Is there a way to give them what they want within the context of teaching writing as a process?

4. Whom are we talking to? Are we as textbook publishers trying to indoctrinate teachers? Or are we writing to students?

5. How and where can we help teachers faced with standardized and competency tests? How do we satisfy the teacher who still sees composition as synonymous with sentence proficiency? That is, where and how do we deal with grammar and usage? Do we do a full-blown treatment? Or take a chance on, say, a half-dozen problem areas?

6. Does a teacher want to follow our book page by page, or should the teacher be able to dip in and out?

7. How much reading about writing can we expect students to do? How much can we expect them to glean from models? Should we show only good models?

8. What role if any should a composition textbook play in helping students with writing in other disciplines?

9. What is our responsibility re. evaluating end products? Judith Langer reminds us in a recent RTE article that the process-product pendulum may be finding equilibrium again.

10. Are modules--demand publishing--the way to go? How can that be economically feasible?

11. How can we combine print publishing with word processing in a commercially viable way? I put everything I knew about the writing process to practice in doing this speech, but I used word processing also--it certainly makes all the tenets of the writing process easier to accept.

But even while we ask these questions, the current situation is not so bleak. As a result of research and of change in some teachers' practices, publishers do put different material in their high school books now than they did 20 years ago.

1. high school composition texts do have chapters about prewriting and invention
2. high school composition texts now do acknowledge peer editing

3. high school composition texts now do talk about the process of writing--as well as the product

4. In fact, we see changes not limited to grammar and composition tomes but changes that extend to the composition assignments in literature books as well.

   [See attached examples of assignments from 20 years ago and assignments from current anthology. Those from today are much more limited and structured. See also attached sample of process approach to Writing About Literature from Macmillan Literature Series, Grade 12.]

In sum we have seen some progess and, yes, we still have a way to go. We need answers to the questions I listed a few moments ago. But the very fact that we ask these questions tells me that we obviously are not dealing with a case of a missing link--because we publishers are asking the same questions, voicing the same concerns, as publishers of college textbooks, and we are sharing the same problems that theorists face every day. If it's not a missing link, what is it then? It's just that time lag, I've been alluding to.

In the meantime maybe we should all look upon the diversity in classroom practices as a sort of system of checks and balances. Perhaps when all

is said and done, there's something comforting in knowing that high school composition teachers are not all one animal and that they don't all immediately adopt every new theory and approach. Maybe there is something to be said for taking it slow.

IV. DANGERS OF FORMULAS

I do have one thing to say about the new and revised high school composition texts that will undoubtedly be published in the rest of this decade. I hope all will avoid the pitfall of thinking there's a formula we can give students for writing, because if we've learned anything in recent years, it's that writing by the numbers does not produce the most satisfying prose.

Perhaps you've heard the story about the high school composition teacher who told the class that all effective stories had to have four ingredients: a reference to the Deity, a reference to royalty, a hint of sex, and an element of mystery. Everyday she began her class by reminding her students of these four ingredients--a reference to the Deity, a reference to royalty, a hint of sex, and an element of mystery. At last the day came when she was going to let the students actually write. (Up until now all she'd done was talk about writing!) And on that fateful day she once again reminded them of the importance of a

reference to the Deity, a reference to royalty, a hint of sex, and an element of mystery. The students started writing, and the teacher walked around the classroom. Very shortly, she noticed that the young man in the last seat of the last row had finished writing. She approached him and with astonishment in her voice asked how he could be finished so soon. He answered, "It was simple. I simply followed your advice and included a reference to the Deity, a reference to royalty, a hint of sex, and an element of mystery." The teacher picked up the young man's paper, looked at the one line on it, and read:

"My God," said the duchess, "I'm pregnant. Who did it?"

A COMPARISON OF COMPOSITION ASSIGNMENTS
IN HIGH SCHOOL LITERATURE ANTHOLOGIES

LITERARY SELECTION	ASSIGNMENT FROM 1960s ANTHOLOGY	ASSIGNMENT FROM 1980s ANTHOLOGY
Great Expectations	Here are some suggestions for composition topics: A Character Study of Abel Magwitch Joe Gargery and Mrs. Joe--an Odd but Happy Couple What Is a Snob? Pip's Most Courageous Decision Estella Wasn't to Blame You Can't Run Away from Your Problems etc.	At the beginning of Great Expectations, Pip and Joe are quite alike. Later in the novel their differences help to keep them apart. Compare and contrast the characters of Pip and Joe. First describe the similarities that make them friends at the beginning of the novel. Second tell whether each character changes during the novel, and explain how he changes. Then describe the differences between them when they meet in London. Finally explain how alike or different they are at the end of the novel.
"The Open Window"	Saki's whimsical stories often show him to be a foe of dull, unimaginative living. Through his tone and the plot in "The Open Window" Saki seems to be commenting on people and, indirectly, to be expressing an outlook on life. What is this comment, this outlook? Try to phrase Saki's attitude toward life in your own words, using as many paragraphs as necessary.	Evaluate the effect of the "double" ending of "The Open Window." Begin by discussing how you responded to the first appearance of the hunters. Then explain how you responded when you realized the truth. Finally discuss whether you liked the way the story ended.

[F. Weinberg, 3/84]

WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE HANDBOOK

Revising and Editing Checklist

The lessons in this handbook will help you think about literature in ways that you may be asked to when you are given essay assignments. If you can think clearly about literature, you will be on your way to writing clear analyses of literature.

The lessons will show you how to approach writing as a process. For each essay assignment they will advise you on prewriting steps to follow, and they will suggest how you can proceed from paragraph to paragraph. Each lesson will also remind you to revise and edit your first draft into a more polished final draft. Here are specific guidelines to follow as you review your first draft.

1. Read your writing aloud. Your ear has been responding to words longer than you have been writing.
2. Use the following checklist to revise your writing. If you can answer "yes" to each question on the list, you will submit an essay that your audience will find interesting and logical.

I. Organization
   a. Does your thesis statement in the introductory paragraph relate directly to the assignment?
   b. Are the ideas mentioned in the thesis statement then taken up in the following paragraphs with a topic sentence for each?
   c. Is there clear movement from paragraph to paragraph by means of transitions?
   d. Does the final paragraph offer a restatement of the thesis statement along with additional insights?

II. Content
   a. Does the essay as a whole adequately answer the question posed in the assignment?
   b. Is each idea adequately developed with supporting details from the literature rather than simply stated and restated in different ways without evidence?

III. Grammar, Usage, Mechanics
   a. Is each sentence complete (no fragments, no run-ons)?
   b. Have you avoided errors in the use of verbs (especially, subject-verb agreement), pronouns, and modifiers?
   c. Have you correctly capitalized and punctuated all sentences?
   d. Are all words spelled correctly?

IV. Word Choice, Style
   a. Have you used words that are appropriate for your audience and your purpose?
   b. Have you avoided slang and clichés unless (and this should be rare) you are using them for a very special purpose or effect?
   c. Have you eliminated wordiness and vagueness?
   d. Have you varied sentence length and structure while checking for parallelism?

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LESSON 2: Writing a Comparison/Contrast

As you identify similarities and differences between two works of literature, you are examining the properties of each work in order to define its meaning. A comparison/contrast analysis of two works clarifies your understanding of how each author has approached the subject, what the meaning or theme is, and how each author feels about the subject.

CONCEPTS TO REMEMBER

1. *To compare* in this lesson means "to examine two or more literary works for the purpose of noting similarities." *To contrast* means "to examine two or more literary works for the purpose of noting differences."
2. In stories and novels you can compare and contrast these elements: plot, characters, settings, points of view, tones, themes, symbols, and irony.
3. In poetry you can compare and contrast these elements: speakers, sound devices, rhythm, rhyme, imagery, and figurative speech.

TYPICAL ESSAY QUESTION

When you are asked to compare and contrast two literary works, you will often have to answer an essay assignment like this one:

> Select two pieces of literature that you have read. Compare and contrast the two by pointing out similarities and differences in content and literary techniques.

PREWRITING

1. Use the following questions and others like them to compare and contrast two stories.
   a. What plot elements in each are similar?
   b. How are the characters similar or different? Do the characters change, or do they remain the same throughout the story?
   c. From what point of view is each story told?
   d. What is the setting of each piece? In what period does it take place? Under what social conditions?
   e. The tone of each piece may be serious, comic, straightforward, ironic, angry, etc. Are the tones of the two pieces alike or different?
   f. What theme is each author expressing?
   g. What symbols are used? How?
   h. How is irony used in each piece?
   i. What is the total impact of each piece?
2. Use the following questions and others like them to compare and contrast two poems.
   a. Does each poem focus on the actions of a character? On a place? On a thing? On an event?
   b. Does each poem focus on an idea? A feeling?
   c. What is your emotional response to each?
   d. On what does each poem cause you to reflect?
   e. Who is the speaker in each poem?
   f. What sound devices are used in each?
   g. What kind of rhyme and rhythm is used?
   h. How does each poem use imagery to appeal to your five senses?
   i. What figures of speech are used in the poem?
3. Prepare a chart (see the opposite page) on which to record your answers to the questions in Prewriting Step 1 or Step 2 and to any other questions you have devised.

WRITING PARAGRAPH BY PARAGRAPH

1. Begin your introductory paragraph with a thesis statement that restates the main points of the assignment. State the major similarities and differences in meaning and technique.

   Example: The two Scottish folk ballads, "Sir Patrick Spens" and "The Wife of Usher's Well" tell different stories that, however, share common techniques and a common theme.

2. Use one of the following options for organizing the body of the essay.

   Option A
   Introductory paragraph
   Next paragraph: Tell about one selection.
   Next paragraph: Tell about the second one.
   Next paragraph: Discuss similarities and differences based on two preceding paragraphs.
   Concluding paragraph

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SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN POEMS

SELECTION: (1) "Sir Patrick Spens" and (2) "The Wife of Usher's Well"

	SPEAKER AND TONE	FOCUS	SOUND	THEME OR MEANING
SELECTION 1	Speaker tells story directly to audience *Tone:* Foreboding, sad, somber	*Events:* Knight recommends Sir Patrick as the man to sail the king's ship. Shipwreck and drowning of all hands	*Rhythm.* ballad stanza *Rhyme:* Follows ballad rhyme scheme, *abcb* *Alliteration:* "A loud lauch lauched he" *Repetition of words and phrases:* "Half owre, half owre to Aberdour"	Death at sea as a result of the captain's ignoring his premonition to carry out his duty; loyalty both of captain and his men
SELECTION 2	Speaker tells story directly to audience *Tone:* Sad, but not ominous	Drowning at sea of the three sons Visitation by ghosts of three sons to comfort mother and to say goodby to life	*Rhythm:* ballad stanza *Rhyme:* Follows ballad rhyme scheme, *abcb* *Alliteration:* "And a wealthy wife was she" *Repetition of phrases and words:* "They hadna' been a week from her, a week but barely ane."	*Disaster:* Death at sea; loyalty and love of mother and sons

Option B

Introductory paragraph

Next paragraph: Discuss the similarities in meaning and elements in each selection.

Next paragraph: Discuss the differences in meaning and elements in each selection.

Concluding paragraph

3. In the concluding paragraph use different words to remind readers of your thesis. Focus on whether the two selections are more alike or more different.

REVISING AND EDITING

See page 925 for detailed reminders about improving your writing.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Use the chart for "Sir Patrick Spens" and "The Wife of Usher's Well" to write a comparison/contrast for the two folk ballads.
2. Do one of the "Writing a Comparison/Contrast" assignments that follow the selections by Geoffrey Chaucer (page 63), Edmund Spenser (page 93), Robert Browning (page 425), William Butler Yeats (page 540), John Galsworthy (page 591), Aesop (page 673), Dante (page 747), the Troubadours (page 751), Petrarch (page 757), Molière (page 787), Paul Verlaine (page 845), Rainer Maria Rilke (page 855), Eugenio Montale and Czeslaw Milosz (page 874), and Hermann Hesse (page 898).

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